

Unveiling the Dynamics of Youth-led Protest Activism and Its Influence on Policy Changes and Democratic Governance in Africa.

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Abstract

In recent times, youth-led protest activism has proliferated across African countries. Despite this, the existing academic and policy literature has paid little empirical attention to the political outcomes and impact of youth-led protest activism in influencing policy change and democratic governance. This article examined the dynamics of youth-led protest activism and its influence on policy change and democratic governance in Africa, focusing primarily on the #EndItsSARS, #NotTooYoungToRun, and EndBadGovernance protests in Nigeria and the #RejectFinanceBill protest in Kenya, and including cross-national comparison. A qualitative case study approach based on descriptive research design was employed, and data were collected from peer-reviewed literature sourced using the three biggest academic online search engines (Google Scholar, Research Gate, and Academia.Edu). The data obtained was analyzed using thematic content analysis. The results indicate that prevailing socio-economic conditions, such as social and economic injustice, are major drivers of youth-led protest activism in Africa. The result also revealed that social media is fast becoming a powerful tool for political activism, empowering disadvantaged young people to influence policy and decision-making and participate in political processes. Finally, the result revealed that youth-led protest activism has been so successful in driving institutional reforms, policy change, and democratic governance in Africa. The findings are a provocative challenge long-standing notion of youths as passive political participants and raise fresh concerns about the expansion of the scope of political participation beyond voting and contesting elections, but also includes digital activism and street protest. The study recommended the need for institutional reform to enhance youth representation in democratic governance to counter democratic backsliding.

Keywords: Youth, Political Participation, Policy Change, Protest activism, Democracy

Introduction

Today, the youth population is booming globally, and constitutes over half of the population in the world and one-third of the voting age population (Cristina et al., 2023), with more than 1.8 billion youths aged between 15 and 30 (Marah, Pradhan, & Shuhood, 2024). However, this growing youthful population has not translated into a commensurate representation of youth in policymaking in both matured and nascent democracies. Sadly, policy and decision-making processes have been dominated and monopolized by gerontocrats outside the youth bracket (15–29 years) in Africa and beyond for quite some time. Older ever before, the average age of current global leaders is 62 compared with 55 in 1970 (Pew Research Survey, 2024; Economist, 2024), and the current average age of parliaments is 51. This is acute in African countries like Nigeria, where the political system rewards older generations, with the average age of the current and past presidents and national parliamentarians having been over 50 years old since the rebirth of Nigeria's democracy in 1999.

Over the past decade, youth-led protests have significantly increased globally. In Africa, there has been growing concern about an unprecedented increase in political activism (both online and offline) among young people who felt deprived and disconnected from traditional political institutions and processes in Africa and beyond, challenging the government's economic and political policies and demanding for a fair, just, and egalitarian society. The continent has witnessed more than 30 new, non-violent youth-led mass protests from 2011 to 2024, nearly double as many as Europe and Asia (Onyonge, 2024). Notable examples among them are the Arab Springs of 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt, 'Y'en a Marre!' ('Enough is enough!') of 2012 in Senegal, #GambiaHasDecided movement of 2016 in Gambia; #Zuma Must Fall Protest of 2015 and 2017 in South Africa, #EndSARs protest of 2022, and more recently #EndBadGovernance protest of 2024 in Nigeria, #RejectFinanceBill protest of 2024 in Kenya, and #Anti-Corruption Protest of July 2024 in Uganda. This has questioned the long-standing notion that young people are politically apathetic or 'lazy' as peddled by the older generation, prominent among them is the former president, General Muhammadu Buhari.

In recent years, policy reform is now at the heart of youth digital activism and street protests in Africa and beyond. Youth activism is transforming democratic governance from a traditional top-down approach to a participatory bottom-top approach. For example, the #Not-Too-Young-To-Run Movement in 2018, thousands of young people rallied against the underrepresentation of youth in governance and led to the enactment of the Not-Too-Young-To-Run Act 2019. Similarly, in October 2020 #EndSARS Movement, thousands of Nigerian youth protested against police brutality and prompted the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Similar to this, in August 2024, #End Bad Governance Movement, a million Nigerian young people protested nationwide, pushing for policy reforms and demanding fair, just, and transparent democratic governance.

The youth-led social movement has been at the centre of scholarly and policy debate for quite some time. Over the past decades, voluminous studies were conducted on youth-led mass movements, but the majority concentrated on the US and European countries. Although youth activism has increased significantly in Africa, yet there are limited empirical studies conducted on the continent. Among them, majority of the youth-led mass movement studies focused primarily on causes of youth activism (Honwana, Hodgkinson, & Melchiorre, 2021; De Bruijn & Both, 2017; Yaghi, 2015; Faupel & Wojtanik, 2020; Earle, 2011), with little empirical attention political outcomes of youth led mass movements. There are limited policy literature on political outcomes of youth-led protests and its influence on policy and legislative change (Mac-Ikemenjima, 2024; Bhattacharya & Thakur, 2020;) as well as democratic governance. Although much has been written about the role of social media in youth political activism, the topic remains understudied.

In this article, we aim to fill literature gaps by exploring the political outcomes of youth-led protests and its influence on policy change and democratic governance in Nigeria and in comparison with other African countries. We set out three assumptions: (H0₁) socio-economic conditions of young people have significantly drive protest activism in Africa; (H0₂) social media has significantly creates space for young people to organize, mobilize and execute protest activism in Africa; (H0₃) youth-led protest activism has significantly influence policy changes and democratic governance in Africa. We ask questions such as: How do socio-economic conditions shape youth participation in politics? How young people do weaponized social media within political activism? Do youth-led political activism (protest) influence policy change and democratic governance?

This article contributes to the ongoing debate on youth participation in African politics beyond traditional lens, and also adds to the limited literature on the political outcomes of youth-led mass movement and its influence on policy change and democratic governance. Additionally, this article also deepens our understanding of the political outcomes of youth-led mass protest and impact of collection actions on policy change and democratic governance. Practically, the article provides strong and robust body of empirical evidence for the policymakers.

This article was structured into five sections as follows. Section 1 presents introduction. Section 2 provides a review of relevant literatures and outlines of different theoretical perspective to youth activism from its beginnings in the 19th century through its major turns into the present century. Section 3 describes methods used in data collection and analysis. Section 4 presents the discussion of results. Finally, section 5 discusses conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review: Conceptual and Empirical Review

Conceptualizing Youth, Protest Activism, Social media, and Policy Change

There has been contention in policy literature about definition of youth. The concept of youth has been defined differently by different scholars from a different perspectives, without consensus. For instance, according to the United Nations (UN) and World Bank, youth are individuals fall within age bracket of 15–24 years (World Bank, 2020; and UN, 2022). In contrast, European Union Strategy for Youth defined youth as teenagers between the ages of 13-30 years (EUSY, 2023). African Youth Charter (2006) defined youth as any person aged between 15-35 years (AU, 2024). However, definition of youth varies across African countries, for instance, in Nigeria, youth are teenagers aged between 15-29 years (National Youth Policy, 2019;); 13-35 years in Ghana (National Youth Authority Act, 2016); 14-35 years in South Africa (National Youth Policy, 2020); 18-34 years in Kenya; 15-35 years in Cameroon; and 18-30 years in Egypt. There are some non-numerical age categorization definition of youth, Marina, (2022); and Dar, (2015) defined youth as a transitional stage of life from dependence of childhood to independence of adulthood. This article adopt the definition of youth by African Youth Charter 2006.

The population of young people in Africa is booming, with more than 60% of the population is currently younger than 25 years, and constitute one-third of the voting age population (Cristina, et al., 2023), making Africa the world's youngest continent (Marah, Pradhan, & Shuhood, 2024). Despite of this booming population, young people are seen as a "second class citizens", being the most politically marginalized group after women. Several studies documented that political space in Africa was and is still dominated by older generation with little space for youth in policy and making processes across African countries. A 2021 report by Inter-Parliamentary Union indicates that less 2% of parliamentarians are

younger 30 year old Africa, for instance 10.34% in Gambia, 4.6% in Morocco, 5.2% in Tunisia, 0.7% in Ghana (IPU, 2021). In recent studies many socio-economic and political reasons were cited as the causes of youth marginalization in policy and decision making in Africa, for instance, studies reported that candidacy age limit across African countries is extremely high, with nearly 75% of the African countries including Nigeria, in theory candidacy age limit start at 25 (IPU, 2021) for parliament and 35 for president in Africa, and makes it difficult for youth to participate directly in policy and decision making processes. In reality, the average age of past and current presidents in Africa is over 50 years, with the youngest serving president being 47 years old far above youth age bracket. Studies politics is expensive across African countries, and huge financial resources are needed for the purchase of party nomination form, which make it difficult for the young Nigerians to participate in democratic governance. There is urgent need for institutional reform to create conducive environment that can encourage youth participation in democratic governance. In theory, the candidacy for the Senate and House of Representatives in Nigeria starts at 25 years, while it is 35 years for the presidency. However, this does not reflect reality, as the average age of past presidents in Nigeria since the transition to democracy in 1999 is over 50 years, with the youngest being 53 years of age, while the other four Presidents have been over 60 years. As a result, young people create for themselves an alternative ways to challenge government policies and demand for a better future.

Youth-led Protest Activism

More than ever before, protest activism has proliferated globally in the last decade. A rich body of academic and policy literature on protest activism has been produced across various disciplines from different perspectives. Some scholars view protest as a positive terms, while other conceive it as negative term. Protest activism includes “violent and non-violent activities against political machinery. Amenta & Polletta, 2019; Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004; Tarrow, 2012). From positive perspective, in his famous book, *“When all Else Fails: The Ethics of Resistance against Social Injustice”*, Brennan, (2019) maintains that protest is a resistance against social injustice, abuse of power and wrongdoing by government. He considered protest as a moral duty of a citizen to resist against violation of social contract by state or its agents. In a more comprehensive sense, Eesuola (2015) defines protest activism as a method used by disaffected, disempowered and deprived individuals or group of individual to express dissatisfaction, distrust and lack of confidence with the current political system, and demand for social and political change.

Protest activism has long been associated with youth culture. Many studies argue that young people (Gen Z) are more likely to participate in protest than older generation. More recently, studies Kowalewski, (2024); Olaitan, (2024); Pitti, (2018) maintained that protest activism is fast becoming an alternative, unconventional form of political participation among young people who felt dissatisfied and excluded from the traditional political institutions and processes, to influence government policy and making in both matured and nascent democracies across the world. Protest is one of the forms of interaction between leaders and followers. This has expanded the scope of political participation beyond conventional electoral participation (such voting, party membership and contesting elections, but also includes protest, demonstration and signing of petition through which citizens react and respond to government policies and other activities. Studies conclude that youth participation in political protest increases alongside decrease in conventional electoral forms of participation (voting and other electoral activities). This has challenge the long-standing notion of youth as politically apathetic and inactive.

Weaponizing Social media: From digital Activism to Street Protest

Social media is fast becoming a powerful tool for civic and political engagement in recent times, revolutionizing traditional political participation and providing opportunities for citizens to react and respond to government policies and other activities. Social media connects citizens with policy makers without physical barriers. Young people (popularly known as dot.com generation) have embraced social media more than older cohort. A report by Burgess, (2024) indicates that about 92% of young people under 30 years globally reported using social media daily, and 80% of TikTok users are youth aged 16-34 years, which has made it much easier to mobilize young people for protest activism (Burgess, 2024).

The role social media in modern protest activism in Africa has been reported in several studies. From Arab Spring in the beginning of the 21st century to the #End Bad Governance protest in August 2024, young people have weaponized social media platforms to organize, coordinate, mobilize, excute protests as well as capture global attention and support using of hashtags, viral videos, and live streaming. several researchers (Okibe, 2024; Naik, 2022; Akporue & Vincent, 2025; Ezeigbo, 2024) were optimistic that social media can increase both digital political activism and and street protest activism among young people. From online activism to street protest, social media specifically Twitter and Facebook are often used by discontented youth to express the dissatisfaction about staus of governance and demand for improved governance, social justice, equality, and transparency and accountability, and policy change.

The role of social media in modern protest activism across African has expanded political participation beyond traditional lens, positioned digital activism as a new, alternative form of political participation among young people to influence public policy and democratic governance.

Public Policy

Nwoko & Offor, (2024) defined Public policy as set of government formulated laws, regulations, programmes and principles which the government use to improve the living conditions of the citizens in any given society. In agreement with the above, Adegbua (2018) explains that public policy essentially denotes a body of guiding solutions and laws which constitutes a statutory response to the yearnings and aspiration of the majority of the people in a community, region or whole country over a pestering social issue. In furtherance to corroborating the above position, Ekpan (2021) asserts that public policy is a strategic instrument that is backed by enabling laws with which the government responds to identified social needs or prevalent societal problems. In this context, public policy connotes deliberate actions and inactions of government which are primarily aimed at reducing the sufferings of the citizens through jobs creation, quality education, healthcare delivery, portable water and stable electricity. Hence, Odiete (2020) informs that public policy encompasses a network of recycling activities that are primarily purposed at bringing sustainable succour to the varying needs of the people, manifesting in healthcare needs, rising cases of unemployment, poverty, insecurity, etc.

Theoretical Approaches to the Understanding of Youth-led Protest and Policy Change

The theoretical perspectives on youth-led protest and policy change presented in the previous literature, can be summarized into four as follows:

From relative deprivation perspective, studies such as Berger and Milkman (2010); Jasper and Poulsen (1995); van Laer (2011); Coleman (1990); Gurr (1970); Lewis and Kraut (1972) who strongly maintain that young people who take part in acts of protest activism...are discontented and deprived of basic necessities of life such as quality education, good healthcare, job opportunities (Muller and Jukam, 1983). Consistently, as della Porta and Diani (2006: 47) have maintained, youth participation in unconventional political actions such as protests activism only reacts to prevailing socio-economic deprivation and demand for better future through policy change.

From bottom-up approach, studies (e.g. Nwoko & Offor, 2024; Ojo & Afolaranmi, 2024) argue that exclusion and the deliberate disregard for the opinions and contributions of the target beneficiaries (youth) from participating directly in the policy formulation and implementation is the main driver of people engagement in alternative form of political action such as protest activism to influence policy change and democratic governance. More recently, there has been widespread youth-led protest activism against the implementation of unpopular policies as evident in Kenya's End Finance Bill protest in June, 2024; 2012 Occupy Nigeria movement against fuel subsidy removal and August 2024; End Bad Governance protest against economic policies in Nigeria; and Bangladesh's Anti- Job Quota Reform protest in 2023.

From a populist perspective, literature argues that citizens who felt dissatisfied with way institutions of representative democracy are working are more likely to participate in non-institutional activities such as protest activism and demonstration to advocate for institutional reform and policy change compared to those who satisfied (Engesser et al. 2017; Spruyt et al. 2016; Foa, et al., 2020). Many studies maintain that young people expressed more dissatisfaction with the way institutions of representative democracy are working compared with older people. They felt that politicians are corrupt and political parties do not represent the interests of the younger generation, and consequently, they engage in informal political activities such as protest activism to influence policy and decision making (Jeroense et al. 2021). Existing literatures from populist perspective shows relatively higher probability of young people engaging in unconventional political activities to shape policy making and democratic governance, and lower probability of participating in conventional electoral participation.

From a political transformational perspective, literature stresses that the growing youth engagement in unconventional political activities such as protest activism is a generational effect. Lived experiences are central to the understanding of youth involvement in protest activism. Today's young people (Gen Z) are facing numerous life challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and lack financial resources among others more than previous generation. Gen Z geared their energy and time on meeting immediate and long term goals, with fewer time to participate in conventional political activities such as voting and contesting for public office. Several other authors have argued that the protest activism led by current generation of young people is the result of their socio-economic conditions in a complex and hostile society—one which is a far cry from the world inhabited by previous generations of young people (Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Miles 2000).

Research Methodology

In this article, we aim to investigate the dynamics of youth-led activism, causes and its influence on policy making and democratic governance in contemporary Africa. To examine three research assumptions, a qualitative case study approach (QCSA) based descriptive research design was employed to investigate the political outcomes of youth-led protest activism and its influence on policy change and democratic governance in Africa. The qualitative approach provides an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of youth-led political activism and impact on policy change and democratic governance. While, descriptive research design allow researcher to properly explain the variables under study rather than mere statistical description of the subject-matter under investigation. The study relied on secondary data obtained from published academic and policy literature on youth participation in protest activism in Africa produced between 2010 and 2024 was used. The three biggest online search such as ResearchGate, Google Scholar, and Academia edu were used to obtain academic and policy papers for this study. To search for relevant papers, the following keywords were used: "Youth-led Protest activism", "digital activism", "youth political engagement", "youth agency", "unconventional forms of political participation", "youth participation in non-institutional political activism", "policy making process", "democratic governance. However, 315 peer-reviewed literature were obtained, recognising their significant impact. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse data in line three questions raised in section one.

Discussion of Results and Findings

H01: Socio-economic conditions of young people have a significant effect on protest activism in Africa

Contrary to the long-standing assumption and result in ahistorical and conventional literature that claimed that youth are politically apathetic and inactive, which accounts for their that young people are political apathetic and inactive, this present study found that two-third of the recent studies revealed that the prevailing socio-economic conditions (such as poverty, social injustice, inequality, limited access to employment, quality education and healthcare) experienced by young people have significantly reshape their participation in protest activism across African countries. The socio-economic conditions experienced by young people hinder their ability to participate directly in policymaking processes. As a result, they create for themselves alternative ways to influence policymaking processes

For instance, studies conducted on the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria by Olaitan (2024), George (2020), Okunna (2021), Emokpae (2024), Agabi et al. (2024), and Udenze et al. (2024) maintained that the October 20 #ENDSARS protest was a response to decades-longstanding unresolved youth dissatisfaction with the Nigerian police force due to the incessant human rights violations such torture, cruel and inhumane treatment; physical assaults, unlawful arrests and detentions, sexual harassment of women, brutalisation of young men and extrajudicial killing. The Centre for Law Enforcement and Education (CLEEN) has observed that the use of violence by the Nigeria police personnels against the citizens in Nigeria was alarming in its survey through 14 states, 14.8 percent of those interviewed said they have been physically assaulted by the Nigeria police personnel 22.5 percent said they have been threatened to be shoot in the past, 73.2 percent said they had witnessed the police beating other persons. A sample of 197 inmates revealed higher figures of police abuse, 81% of respondents said they had been beaten or slapped and 39% burnt with hot objects.

Comparatively, the result is similar to the finding of the study conducted on the June 2024 #Reject Finance Bill protest in Kenya by Okibe (2024), Brian & Onyango (2024), who equally found that the protest was a reaction against unpopular liberal economic policies of Ruto's government for lacking sensitivity to address the needs of the deprived and marginalized population. Many Kenyan teenagers perceived that

the proposed Kenya Finance Bill, which seeks to impose 16% VAT on basic items such as bread, sanitary pads, and mobile phones, would disproportionately exacerbate the prevailing socio-economic conditions (poverty, inflation, rising cost of living) among young Kenyans.

The population for this study comprised of social media posts, online campaigns, and articles related to Kenya's Gen Z opposition to the Finance Bill 2024. A purposive sampling method was applied, focusing on key platforms such as Twitter (X), TikTok, and Facebook where youth engagement and mobilization were most active. The sample size included 300 high-engagement posts selected from trending hashtags such as #RejectFinanceBill2024, #RutoMustGo, #OccupyStateHouse, and #GenZVoices, which capture the movement's scope and sentiment. This included 100 posts from Twitter (X), 100 TikTok videos, and 100 Facebook comments/posts, ensuring a balanced representation across platforms that reflects the broader discourse within the youth-led movement.

H0₂ social media platforms have a significant effect in fostering youth participation in protest activism in Africa

Contrary to the expectation of the cyber-skeptics (Warren 2011; Morozov 2011; Joseph 2011) who claimed that that social media are tools of repression, and gives young people a false sense of participation, keeps them away from conventional electoral participation and street protesting, we found that the overwhelming majority of empirical studies revealed that social media serve as catalyst for fostering youth mobilization and participation in both digital activism and street protest in Africa. It was found that social media platforms particularly X (formerly known as twitter) and TikTok are fast becoming powerful tools for youth engagement in activism, distinguishing their mode of political engagement from those of previous generations. This corroborating with the finding of the studies conducted on #End Finance Bill protest in Kenya by Brian & Onyango (2024), Okibe (2024); #EndSARS and #End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria by Agabi et al. (2024), Ojo & Afolaranmi (2024), Olaitan (2024); Arab Spring 1.0 and 2.0 in Tunisia and Egypt by Ahmad (2024), Waechter (2019), and Wolfsfeld et al. (2013) who equally revealed that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and more recently TikTok have been used to organize and mobilize disadvantaged young people for collective actions and demand policy change and democratic governance across African countries. This demonstrates the role social media in revolutionizing and expanding the scope of political participation, by empowering disadvantaged young people to question government activities, influence policy and decision-making and directly participate in the political processes. In comparison with protest against Job Quota reform in Bangladesh, social media was used in organizing and mobilizing hundred thousand of young people into street, which led to the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (Shabur & Siddiki, 2024).

This confirmed our assumption that social media has significant influence on youth-led protest activism in Africa. The is increasingly changing youth political participation, and produce new, alternative forms political engagement such as digital activism among connected young people questioning the status of governance and fighting against social and economic injustice, and demand for a fair, just and egalitarian democratic society. The used of social media during the 2011 Arab springs, 2012 Occupy Nigeria, October 2022 #EndSARS, #EndBadGovernance, Kenya's Reject Finance Bill and Uganda's Anti-corruption protests have positioned digital activism as a new form of unconventional political participation among young people.

H0₃: youth-led protest activism has significantly influence policy changes and democratic governance in Africa

In this study, we found that youth-led protest activism in Africa have been so successful in driving institutional reforms, policy change and democratic governance. Policy reform is now at the heart of youth digital activism and street protest in Africa. For instance, in Nigeria, #2012 Occupy Nigeria protest led by disadvantaged Nigerian teenagers against fuel subsidy removal has successfully led to oil and gas sector reform in 2012, the reduction in PMS Price from 158 to N97 per litre, and institutional reform in Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Similarly, 2018 #NotTooYoungToRun movement led young people against underrepresentation of youth in governance, has successfully led enactment of Not-Too-Young-To-Run Act, reducing the age limit for contesting public offices from 40 to 35 years for president and vice president, and from 30-25 years for House of Representatives and State House of Assembly respectively. There are 22 direct beneficiaries of the age-eligibility reduction law in the State Houses of Assembly in 2023 elections. Similar to this, October 2020 #End SARS Movement led thousands of Nigerian youth against police brutality, has prompted the dissolution of Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

Similar to this, in August 2024 #End Bad Governance Movement, a million of Nigerian young people protested nationwide, pushing for policy reforms and demanding for fair, just and transparent democratic governance. Like Nigeria, June 2024 #Reject Finance Bill led young Kenyans has successfully achieved its goals in Kenya, leading to not only withdrawal of the proposed liberal Finance Bill but also institutional reforms, for instance, the dismissal of his entire ministers, to form an inclusive and efficient government. This is similar to the finding of Marks, et al. (2019) who equally found that more than half (58%) of the youth-led pro-democracy movements aimed at toppling authoritarians in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mali, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia, and, most recently, Algeria and Sudan, have succeeded.

Youth activism is transforming democratic governance from traditional top-down approach to participatory bottom-top approach. This finding has challenge the notion of youth as anti-democratic claimed in most quantitative studies (Ana, et al., 2017; Andrew, 2020; Arthur, 2025; Bekker, et al., 2022; Chauke, 2022; Cohen, et al., 2024; and Tamanna, 2017). In comparison, the results are concurring with findings from the recent 2024 Afrobarometer survey equally revealed that most Africans, two-third youth in 34 out 39 countries surveyed preferred democracy any other system of government and endorsed core democratic norms, institutions, and practices (see, figure 3). However, only five countries such as Mali, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, and Lesotho reject democracy and prefer authoritarian rule.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study uncovered the dynamics of youth participation in protest activism in Africa, using qualitative case study based on descriptive research design. Based on our findings, we conclude that young people are not disinterested in politics per se, but rather, they seem to be increasingly engaging in unconventional political actions, because they lack faith in political institutions, processes and political system. Overall we found that young people engage more in unconventional political actions than conventional political actions. Despite, the worries of some authors with respect to the decline in youth engagement in formal politics, the emerging of new alternative forms of political participation such as digital activism and street protest have been instrumental in driving socio-political changes and democratic consolidation. In fact, young people that were participating less before in conventional politics, are more active in those unconventional, informal, and non-institutional forms of participation.

The findings of this present study has theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, we developed a new concept such as e-participation and offline political engagement. This study locates youth within both conventional and unconventional political participation, expanding our understanding of youth political participation beyond the traditional lens, exploring the emerging, alternative and unconventional forms of political actions such as protests, demonstrations, and online political engagement and how influence traditional political processes. This adds new perspective to the ongoing discourse on youth participation in politics in 21st century, and add also contribution to the growing literature on political participation. Moreover, according to our theoretical schema, the relationship between the youth protest and policy change is positive. Practically, our finding is supported postmaterialist view that young people are neither apolitical nor politically inactive citizen, they do have an interest in political issues.

A limitation in this present study is that the results using qualitative single case approach cannot be statistically generalized to the rest of African countries. Nevertheless, the results obtained were compared with findings of similar previous studies conducted across various African countries in order to ensure quality of the results.

The present study recommended the urgent need for policy makers and party stakeholders to recognize and harness the power of youth by creating more inclusive frameworks to ensure youth adequate representation in decision making processes. The findings of the study underscore the need for reducing voting age from 18 to 16 years as well as adopting youth quota system in Nigeria. This will go a long way in improving youth participation in formal politics and building vibrant and resilient democracy.

For future research, mixed methods analysis of generational shift in youth participation in politics in Africa should be conducted. In addition, micro and macro-level factors determining youth participation in politics should be studied. Furthermore, for future research it would be interesting to conduct gender-based study on youth participation in politics.

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